

Hallowed Be Your Name

26 April 2025 – Keith Helbley

La Sierra University Church, 9:00 Liturgical Service

Texts¹: Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 118:14-29; Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31

[Video of service on YouTube^{1a}](#)

In Acts 5, we open to a story of the Apostles being brought before the council of high priests and getting a harsh scolding. We told you very plainly, DO NOT teach in the name of Jesus. But look what you have done, you are teaching all over Jerusalem!²

This idea that teaching, or saying things on behalf of someone is an appeal to authority³ – in most cases this helps someone cause, as they are referencing a person that people have respect for or want to be associated with – invoking the power of his person.

In our Christian Religion, we look to the ultimate authority, the Authority of God – The Alpha and Omega⁴, summarized nicely in our reading of Psalm 118⁵. “My Power and my strength, come from the Lord, and he has saved me”. “The Lord is powerful”. We’ll ask the Lord to save us! We’ll sincerely ask the lord to let us win”. “God bless the one who comes in the NAME of the LORD”.

In John is the story of Jesus meeting with Thomas and showing him his hands and side and says⁶ “Stop doubting, have Faith! Jesus said “Thomas, do you have faith because you have seen me? The people who have faith in me without seeing me are the ones who are really blessed. And Jesus worked other miracles – These are written so you will put your faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the son of God. If you have faith in him, you will have true life.

These ideas of the power in a name have been rattling around since Pastor Ben gave a sermon in the 4 days with Jesus series where he recited 3 stories⁷. The first turning the lights off on church members in the restroom. The second drawing in the hymnals, and the third was a story of saying an unholy name 3 times in the mirror in the bathroom at church – All of these recounts were offered as potential examples of Blasphemy. The act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence to God, or the act of offense of speaking sacrilegiously about God or sacred things.

The one that bothered me the most was saying an unholy name in the mirror. This idea that names have power – something I believe, that calling on the name of the lord should not be taken lightly. Something early church officials also had issue with – on who’s name you call, and something the bible tells us that in Romans 10:13 “for everyone who calls on the

name of the Lord will be saved” implies huge power, matters of eternal life and death in a name.

I was called in for Jury duty recently, and after sitting in the general selection pool waiting to be assigned a court case, I found on the bottom of my Jury slip a possible way to shirk my duty. If you have served in the prior year, or been on a case in the previous 2 you can ask to be dismissed. Wonderful I thought! I have just been here – so I pulled out my phone to confirm that trial I sat on with police misconduct was within the last 2 years. As I’m doing this I start thinking about the oath I will be taking:

The judge or the clerk will state to the jury⁸:

“Members of the Jury, you will rise, hold up your right hands, and be sworn to try this case.”

The jurors then rise and hold up their right hands. The jurors face the judge or the clerk who is to administer the oath:

"Do you swear or affirm that you will give careful attention to the proceedings, abide by the court's instructions and render a verdict in accordance with the law and evidence presented to you, **so help you God**"⁹.

I actually have a bit of an issue with this swearing thing, I always hear or read it like I am swearing to God, a promise to God – and this gets reinforced with that gut punch of an ending “So... Help... You.... .God”. This is probably one of the most unpleasant parts of the entire court process for me. Just not something I enjoy.

I continue scrolling through my phone, looking for evidence that I don’t have to endure this whole swearing debacle again and finally find that date. It wasn’t last year I served, unfortunately it was a solid 5 years ago. Man..... Not good. I am a viable juror with no real excuse.

It is literally at this point, scrolling through my phone I get an email from Gary Chartier asking if I would consider doing a homily. Absolutely, I write back. Sign me up!

I am now positive that I will get assigned a case and have something relevant to work into the homily as a visual aid – but alas.. It’s just not my day. An hour later, they let all 140 of us potential jurors go.

I get home, and like pastor Ben¹⁰ also try my hand with a little search on the ‘ol ‘google’ and find that Oaths involved with US Government and service first started to add the term “so help you God” in 1862¹¹ with only a few, but by 1962 most Oaths now contained it^{12,13} or as an option. Surprisingly enough, the president of the United States does not require this “so help me God” in his swearing in oath¹⁴, but it is common for presidents to add it.^{15,16}

Interesting.. I'm thinking to myself, but I know this isn't the only place I've seen the reference to God in government, with this rabbit hole now shaping up to be a deep dive in some of my worst subjects – including both history and government.

Taking out some bills, I find 188^{16a} references to “**In God we Trust**” – the back of each modern bank note currently in circulation in the United States ([see Appendix 1](#)).

\$1 George Washington 1st president (1789)

\$2 Thomas Jefferson 3rd president (1801)

\$5 Abraham Lincoln 16'th president (1861)

\$10 Alexander Hamilton – First US Secretary of Treasury (1789)

\$20 Andrew Jackson – 7'th president (1829)

\$50 Ulysses S. Grant 18'th president (1869)

\$100 Benjamin Franklin, founding father,

The other bills we had, \$500¹⁷, \$1,000¹⁸, \$5,000¹⁹, \$10,000²⁰ and \$100,000²¹ bills were taken out of circulation^{22,23,24} before “In God We Trust” was added from 1957-1966.^{25,26,27,28}

But It doesn't stop there, there are more places that reference God. It wasn't until 1954, the phrase “**Under God**” was added to the pledge of Allegiance²⁹. Why you might ask? Well, During the Cold War era, many Americans wanted to distinguish the United States from the state atheism promoted by communist countries, a view that led to support for the words “under God” to be added to the Pledge of Allegiance.

As a little aside, for a further example of the power in a name, consider how the following names and titles lend credibility to the argument.

Terry Gross on NPR did an Interview in 2015 with Kevin Kruze a Professor of history at Princeton on his book “One Nation under God”³⁰. In this interview we get a little bit bigger slice of this part of American history.

Rev James Fifield a minister in Los Angeles starting in the 1940's comes up with a catchy slogan “freedom under God”.

“He tells millionaires (church members in his pews of Los Angeles) what they want to hear, which is that their worldly success is a sign of heavenly blessing. He has a loose approach to the Bible. He says that reading the Bible should be like eating fish: We take out the bones to enjoy the meat; all parts are not of equal value. Accordingly, he disregarded Christ's many injunctions about the dangers of wealth and instead preached a philosophy that

wedded capitalism to Christianity". Fiefield went on to meet with Presidents, and leaders of industry including the National Association of manufactures”

In this time we started to conflate Religion, Capitalism, Big Business, Patriotism, and Nationalism with “Faith, Freedom, and Free Enterprise”. Using ministers to say things in a credible way – working to establish that Christianity and capitalism were sole mates. Much focus was put on “worldly success is a sign of heavenly blessing”. The 1950’s prayer breakfast is Born from house and senate prayer breakfasts – Conrad Hilton said he would help on “any Christian cause” and got this chance when asked to have a presidential breakfast in the Conrad hotel in Washinton DC – and oh by the way, Hilton should pick up the bill – and this was the First national prayer breakfast in February 1953. President Eisenhower – repeats this prayer breakfast, and it becomes an ongoing presidential prayer breakfast.

“One Nation Under God” and “In God We Trust” become rallying points in the dawn of the cold war, to counter the atheist view of communism, Americans readily embrace a Christian identify.

– Terry did a great interview, you should check it out

If we step back another 50 years before the cold war - In November 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt sought to beautify American coinage³¹, The Eagle (\$10 piece) and double eagle (\$20 piece) ([see Appendix 2](#)). Roosevelt specifically instructed the designer not to include "In God We Trust", a phrase present on coins since 1865. Roosevelt explains³²:

"My own feeling in the matter is due to my very firm conviction that to put such a motto on coins, or to use it in any kindred manner, not only does no good, but does positive harm, and is in effect irreverence, which comes dangerously close to sacrilege. ... Any use which tends to cheapen it, and, above all, any use which tends to secure its being treated in a spirit of levity, is from every standpoint profoundly to be regretted. ... it seems to me eminently unwise to cheapen such a motto by use on coins ... In all my life I have never heard any human being speak reverently of this motto on the coins or show any signs of its having appealed to any high emotion in him, but I have literally, hundreds of times, heard it used as an occasion of and incitement to ... sneering ... Everyone must remember the innumerable cartoons and articles based on phrases like 'In God we trust for the 8 cents,' ... Surely, I am well within bounds when I say that a use of the phrase which invites constant levity of this type is most undesirable."

—President Theodore Roosevelt, 13 November 1904

Despite this warning, some 50 years later in 1956. “One Nation under God” and “In God We Trust” become cold war rallying points with “In God We Trust” becoming the official moto of the United States of America³³.

Dr. Gregg Frazer a Graduate of Claremont Graduate University³⁴ and now a professor of history and political studies writes that³⁵: “though many of the early United States founders were Christians, they did not intend to create a Christian nation. He writes this matters today because of 7 key points:

- 1) As purveyors of truth, Christians damage their witness by promoting historical inaccuracies.
- 2) Designating a mixture of naturalistic influences as “Christian” or “biblical” taints the Word of God and attaches the authority and reputation of the inerrant Word to man-made principles.
- 3) Identifying moral or “religious” people as Christians makes the gospel one of moral behavior and character rather than the saving work of Christ and personal commitment to Him.
- 4) Promotion of the “Christian America” idea causes believers to confuse their cultural/American heritage with biblical Christianity. Many conflate what is truly biblical with American tradition.
- 5) Belief that the system was originally Christian and biblical places undue confidence in processes and institutions rather than in the sovereign God. It directs efforts toward correcting the political system rather than redeeming lost people.
- 6) It sometimes leads to national idolatry and national self-righteousness and treats naturalistic political ideals on a par with Scripture.
- 7) The Bible becomes a tool of a political agenda. Proper use and interpretation of the Bible is viewed as less important than how many times it is quoted.

So... How did we get away with it?

In an influential 1962 lecture³⁶, Dean Eugene Rostow of Yale Law School argued that the government’s “conventional and uncontroversial” expressions of faith, which he called acts of “ceremonial deism,” do not violate the First Amendment’s Establishment Clause.

The term "**ceremonial deism**" has been used since 1984 by the Supreme Court³⁷ of the United States to assess exemptions from the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, thought to be expressions of **cultural tradition and not earnest invocations of a deity**³⁸.

I offer a more subtle additional definition of blasphemy than one that pastor Ben gave; one we may not have touched on yet: "the act of claiming the attributes of a deity"³⁹. I propose that even though the supreme court says they are not making an appeal to a higher authority in their use of God's name in government, that most agree they are using God's name in the way we would in Church. I present to you as evidence that gut wrenching reaction you may have when taking an Oath.

I think of the effectiveness of business marketing and the power that words and ideas can bring to a brand, and sincerely worry the Christian branding, oh..."not branding" of the United States is a blasphemous marketing gimmick as land grab and rallying cry for hearts and minds. Christians are asked in the book of John to have faith, faith when you have seen, faith when you have not seen⁴⁰, and attaching an arbitrary political message and riding on the Christians faith as the implied⁴¹ divine direction of the unseen is absolutely blasphemous.

Embrace, extend, extinguish – was a key phrase found in Microsoft emails discovered in a 1999 Department of Justice lawsuit against Microsoft⁴² – summarizing a shrewd and effective business practice to gain market share. I now watch for this established playbook in many business activities and worry what role it could ultimately play in the roadmap of Christianity in American politics.

Hints of this can be seen in a 2014 Congressional Research report by Heidi Peters with the very catchy title of "Defense Acquisition Reform: Background, Analysis and Issues of Congress"⁴³. This report includes models for acquisitions, one of which references a sign hanging in then Secretary of Defense Frank Kendall's^{44,45} office that reads:

"In God We Trust. All Others Must Bring Data"⁴⁶.

As an engineer I may find this humorous at face value. But I worry that with deeper reflection this could demonstrate the slow erosion and cheapening of what were once mighty and powerful words "In God We trust" - As Roosevelt warned: to become more of a joke, a meme, maybe this is a natural reaction to a state appealing to **ceremonial Diasm**. In the name of "God", but well... **not**.

Maybe the ultimate blaspheme – a bait and switch through embrace, extend, extinguish for those people that are lead to think that a government is acting for, or on behalf of, or with

the support of a Christian God – that when confronted, this government openly claims this has nothing to do with God and is merely.... **Ceremony**.

Consider – as early religious leaders did in todays text in Acts⁴⁷: the power of the name of God. From our texts in Revelation and John⁴⁸: the Alpha and Omega, the one who is and was and is coming. God All-Powerful. The one to bless us with kindness and peace, set us free from our sins and the giver of true life.

Our Holy Guardian God, hallowed be your name⁴⁹.

Amen

References:

1. Texts from Contemporary English Version:
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%205%3A27-32%3B%20Psalm%20118%3A14-29%3B%20Revelation%201%3A4-8%3B%20John%2020%3A19-31&version=CEV>
- 1a. Recording, Homily starts at 30 minutes into video.
YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/live/miZl6Gtr9L4?t=1800s>
Facebook video: <https://fb.watch/zeGAMS8Gwm/>
audio (full): https://archive.org/details/livestream-mi-zi-6-gtr-9-l-4_202504
audio (sermon only): <https://archive.org/details/livestream-mi-zi-6-gtr-9-l-4-homily>
2. Acts 5:28, CEV
3. Argument from authority: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argument_from_authority
4. Revelation 1:8, CEV
5. Psalm 118:14,16b,25,26a CEV
6. John 20:27b,29,30-paraphrased CEV
7. 4 Days With Jesus – Friday, Video
Pastor Ben Amoah, La Sierra University Church, 4-18-2025
<https://www.youtube.com/live/L6Ok34dYH4Q?si=URfRHnEpHTFuM0tu&t=1819>
https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=606292499114000
8. Handbook for trial jurors serving in the United States of district courts. HB100 (Rev. 8/12), page 6. <https://www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/trial-handbook.pdf#:~:text=The%20judge%20or%20the%20clerk%20will%20state,clerk%20who%20is%20to%20administer%20the%20oath.>
9. 22-322. Oath of jury: <https://www.azleg.gov/ars/22/00322.htm>
10. Pastor Ben, “Google:” <https://www.youtube.com/live/L6Ok34dYH4Q?t=1796s>
11. About the Senate & the U.S. Constitution | Oath of Office
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12. 10 U.S.C Sec. 502 Enlistment oath (current oath and revision history, “So Help Me God” added 1962) <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title10/html/USCODE-2011-title10-subtitleA-partII-chap31-sec502.htm>
13. “The Oath of Office, A Historical Guide to Moral Leadership” Lt Col Kenneth Keskel, USAF Air & Space Power Journal - Winter 2002
<https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/Oath%20of%20Office%20Historical%20Guide%20to%20Moral%20Leadership.pdf>

14. The president-elect recites the following oath in accordance with Article II, Section I of the U.S. Constitution:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

<https://www.usa.gov/inauguration>

15. PBS News Hour: Trump sworn in as 47th U.S. president | Trump 2025 Inauguration

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g14ts0KYa98>

16. Presidential Oath:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/So_help_me_God#Presidential_oath

16a add up the 7 bills: $100+50+20+10+5+2+1 = 188$.

17. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_five-hundred-dollar_bill

18. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_one-thousand-dollar_bill

19. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_five-thousand-dollar_bill

20. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_ten-thousand-dollar_bill

21. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_one-hundred-thousand-dollar_bill

22. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Large_denominations_of_United_States_currency

23. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_certificate_\(United_States\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_certificate_(United_States))

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25. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_God_We_Trust#Road_to_universal_mandate

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<https://web.archive.org/web/20210814192031/https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-69/pdf/STATUTE-69-Pg290-2.pdf>

27. “In God We Trust” on dollar bills entering circulation in 1957

<http://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1951-2000/The-legislation-placing-%E2%80%9CIn-God-We-Trust%E2%80%9D-on-national-currency/>

28. Treasury.gov history of “In God We Trust” all bills have mark by September 1966

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29. The Pledge of Allegiance – History and meaning. United States District Court, Southern District of West Virginia, outreach and education - Flag Day 1954, when Congress passed a law, which added the words “under God”

<https://web.archive.org/web/20220630220518/http://www.wvsd.uscourts.gov/pledge-allegiance>

30. Kruse, Kevin M. (March 30, 2015). ["How 'One Nation' Didn't Become 'Under God' Until The '50s Religious Revival". NPR](https://www.npr.org/2015/03/30/396365659/how-one-nation-didnt-become-under-god-until-the-50s-religious-revival)
website:
<https://web.archive.org/web/20180308062853/https://www.npr.org/2015/03/30/396365659/how-one-nation-didnt-become-under-god-until-the-50s-religious-revival>
audio:
https://web.archive.org/web/20180702231916/https://ondemand.npr.org/anon.npr-mp3/npr/fa/2015/03/20150330_fa_01.mp3?orgId=427869011&topicId=1033&aggId=s=100876926&d=1904&p=13&story=396365659&siteplayer=true&dl=1
31. History of \$20 gold piece, 1907 produced briefly without “in god we trust because of Roosevelt, and that same year, returns to produced with the inscription.
<https://www.govmint.com/us-coins/vintage-gold/gold-saint-gaudens>
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<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1907/11/14/106767538.pdf>
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<https://web.archive.org/web/20250216005014/https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-70/pdf/STATUTE-70-Pg732-2.pdf>
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<https://web.archive.org/web/20170807100105/http://www.law.uchicago.edu/alumni/magazine/fall2008/undergod>
39. Definition of blasphemy – Meriam-Webster – definition 1b. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blasphemy>
40. John 20:29
41. Presidential Prayer Breakfast – Donald Trump February 2, 2025

“God has a special plan and a glorious mission for America. And that plan is going to happen. It’s going to happen. I hope it happens sooner rather than later. It’s going to happen. And it’s His hand that guides us every single step of the way. And all of you and the things we have to do is to see the defining role that faith and prayer have played in the life of our nation. And you just have to look at this building, and you can look at each other. You can really look at each other. It’s defined almost everyone in this room. I think faith has been very strong with the people in this room. Just steps away from here, in the Hall of Columns, is the statue of John Winthrop, who famously proclaimed that America would stand as “a city upon a hill, a light to all nations with the eyes of all people upon us.”

<https://web.archive.org/web/20250427235446/https://www.whitehouse.gov/remarks/2025/02/remarks-by-president-trump-at-the-national-prayer-breakfast/>

42. US Department of Justice V Microsoft Proposed Findings of Fact Trial began on October 18, 1998, and concluded on June 26, 1999.

" 91.3.2. Paul Maritz also explained to Intel representatives that Microsoft's response to the browser threat was to "embrace, extend, extinguish – "

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46. Quote “In God we trust; all others must bring data” most likely from W. Edwards Deming.

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191866692.001.0001/q-or-o-ed6-00019739>

47. Acts 5:28

48. Revelation 1:8, Revelation 1:4, Revelation 1:5, John 20:30

49. “Our holy Guardian God; Hallowed be your name” La Sierra Liturgy page 3 (the Lords Prayer adapted from Matthew 6:9-13), Celebrating the Resurrection April 26, 2025.
https://web.archive.org/web/20250428022208/https://lasierra.church/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Liturgy_2025_04_26_Easter.pdf

50.

51. [not used] video on Frank Kendall looking at army research acquisitions
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_yNBMg0I14
52. [Homily too long, the following though relevant, not used]
<https://law.stackexchange.com/questions/48818/what-is-the-difference-between-i-swear-and-i-affirm> in common law countries, the first law allowing affirmation in court was the [Quaker Act 1695](#). This was limited specifically to Quakers and didn't permit them to give evidence in criminal proceedings or to serve on juries. The form of the affirmation given is:

I A.B. do declare in the Presence of Almighty God the Witness of the Truth of what I say.

Quakers, and various other Christian denominations use as biblical authority for this James 5:12, amongst other passages:

But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

It wasn't until (often much) later the various common law countries held that an affirmation by an atheist was considered equivalent to swearing an oath.

A [long discussion](#) is available from the Irish Law Reform Commission.

Appendix 1

7 laminated bank notes as a visual aid. Due to laws around taking, storing and printing images of US currency, pictures of those used in the homily are not included, but an approximation is presented from <https://www.uscurrency.gov/denominations/>. “In God We Trust” is present on the back side of each note, with the smallest being on the bottom of the \$2 bill most likely because it has not received a refreshed design since 1975.





Appendix 2

Directed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904, Augustus Saint-Gaudens designed updated US Eagle and Double eagle coins without “in God We Trust”. For a brief time in 1907 they did not have “In God We Trust” but due to public outcry the inscription was added to the coins in 1907-1908.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle_\(United_States_coin\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eagle_(United_States_coin))



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Gaudens_double_eagle

